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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 05238

FROM AMCONGEN DUBAI

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: SOCI IR
SUBJECT: LIBERALIZING SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN TEHRAN

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY: SINCE KHOMEINI'S DEATH THE ENFORCEMENT OF DRESS CODES AND RULES REGARDING THE APPEARANCE OF WOMEN HAS DECREASED DRAMATICALLY, ACCORDING TO SOURCES WHO HAVE TRAVELED TO IRAN IN RECENT MONTHS. REVGUARD AND KOMITEH PRESENCE ON STREETS HAS DIMINISHED NOTICEABLY AND AS A RESULT PROSTITUTES ARE OPENLY PLYING THEIR TRADE ON THE STREETS OF TEHRAN, ONCE AGAIN. END SUMMARY.

NOT PARIS, BUT.....

13. ACCORDING TO RECENT TRAVELLERS TO IRAN, BOTH IRANIAN RESIDENTS OF DUBAI, AND ONE UAE NATIONAL, WOMEN ARE OPENLY WEARING MAKEUP ON THE STREET IN ALL NEIGHBORHOODS OF TEHRAN, AND NOT ONLY IN THE WEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS OF THE NORTH OF THE CITY, BUT ALSO IN THE SOUTH WHERE SUCH AN OPEN CHALLENGE TO THE DRESS CODE WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN TOLERATED IN THE PAST. AT THE SAME TIME, SEVERAL SOURCES REPORT A BIG CHANGE IN THE STYLE OF CLOTHES IRANIAN WOMEN ARE WEARING. CHADORS ARE LESS PREVALENT, AND THE STANDARD BLACK OR BEIGE RAINCOAT IS BEING REPLACED BY FASHIONABLY STYLED, COLORED RAINCOATS. MANY WOMEN'S HEJABS (HEAD SCARVES) ARE BRIGHTLY COLORED AND ARE BEING WORN FURTHER AND FURTHER BACK ON THE HEAD, OFTEN EXPOSING DYED HAIR. ONE SOURCE REPORTS HAVING SEEN WOMEN WEARING LONG-SLEEVED LONG DRESSES WITHOUT CHADOR OR RAINCOAT COVERING. ONLY ONE SOURCE, A DUBAI BASED IRANIAN, REPORTS HAVING SEEN WOMEN IN THE NORTH OF TEHRAN WEARING NO SCARF AT ALL ON THE STREET. ONE WOMAN GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE WHILE AGREEING THAT THE ENFORCEMENT OF DRESS CODES FOR WOMEN IS BEING EASED ON THE STREETS OF TEHRAN, SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO SIMILAR EASING OF THE DRESS CODE FOR WOMEN WORKING IN GOVERNMENT OFFICES.

14. REVGUARD AND KOMITEH CONTINGENTS HAVE VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED FROM THE STREETS OF TEHRAN, ACCORDING TO ALL SOURCES. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, THE KOMITEH IS BEING INTEGRATED INTO THE GENDARMERIE AND WILL SOON CEASE TO EXIST AS AN INDEPENDENT ENTITY. ONE CONSEQUENCE OF THE DECREASED PRESENCE OF THESE TWO GROUPS IS A VISIBLE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PROSTITUTES ON THE STREETS OF TEHRAN. ACCORDING TO A UAE NATIONAL WHO HAS TRAVELED TO IRAN SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST YEAR, AND WHO WAS THERE IN THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER, HEAVILY MADE UP WOMEN ARE STANDING ON STREET CORNERS THROUGHOUT TEHRAN. THEY BOLDLY APPROACH CARS

STUCK IN TRAFFIC TO SOLICIT CUSTOMERS. SOURCE RELATED ONE INCIDENT HE WITNESSED WHILE BEING DRIVEN INTO TEHRAN FROM THE AIRPORT. A YOUNG WOMAN OF ABOUT SEVENTEEN APPROACHED HIS CAR AND ASKED FOR A RIDE. WHEN HIS DRIVER ASKED WHERE SHE WANTED TO GO, SHE ANSWERED "ANYWHERE". THE DRIVER ASKED IF THAT MEANT SHE WANTED TO GO WHEREVER THEY WERE GOING, SHE ANSWERED AFFIRMATIVELY. SHE THEN CONFERRED THAT SHE WAS "NEW" TO THE BUSINESS AND DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO CHARGE OR WHETHER TO CHARGE IN RIALS OR DOLLARS.

15. UAE SOURCE RECOUNTED ONE STORY WHICH WE REPORT FOR WHATEVER VALUE IT MAY HAVE; THE STORY HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY THREE IRANIAN RESIDENTS OF DUBAI WHO CLAIM TO HAVE HEARD IT FROM PEOPLE WHO VISITED KHOMEINI'S TOMB IN THE PAST MONTH. SOURCE CLAIMS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN HAS BUILT A BARRIER AROUND THE GRAVE OF KHOMEINI TO STOP PEOPLE FROM THROWING MONEY ON HIS GRAVE. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, SHIITE PILGRIMS TRADITIONALLY THROW MONEY WRAPPED IN PAPER OR FABRIC ON THE GRAVES OF THEIR HOLY MEN, AND THE MONEY IS COLLECTED AND USED TO KEEP UP THE SHRINE. SOURCE CLAIMS THAT THE BARRIER WAS SET UP AT KHOMEINI'S TOMB TO STOP THE PRACTICE BECAUSE THE SMELL WAS GETTING TOO STRONG: MANY PEOPLE WERE THROWING EXCREMENT WRAPPED IN PAPER ONTO THE IMAM'S GRAVE.

MACK